

Four years ago this week, I was anticipating the transition from my classroom at B. Gale Wilson to becoming FSUTA president and not knowing what to expect. I was so sad to leave my work family and fly solo most days. I was going to focus on adult interactions without the boost I felt from being with my students. I had been in union leadership for most of my 20 years in teaching but wondered if I was ready to be the “buck stops here” person for 1,100 members.

What certainty I thought I knew was my time as president would four years. I am humbled and happy to remain with you for two more years because we are on the cusp of so many wonderful things. The pandemic slowed a lot of progress we were making as a union. Our member involvement was skyrocketing, great gains were being made in improving working and learning conditions, and new and more positive relationships with management were being explored. These next two years will be an opportunity to uphold those gains as we move forward to even greater power in coming years.

As teachers and educators, we understand the analogy of planting seeds that sometimes take years to sprout. We nurture our students by providing the best possible learning and growing environment. We certainly need the patience of a saint and the delayed gratification of a monk. A lot of the time, it feels as if we are looking at dirt.

In fact, it is often a colleague several years down the road who will witness the harvest of the learning we planted in a student or sit in the shade of a tree planted by some great work done by our union.

We have a young and talented membership with a smattering of experienced members to move our union into so many new arenas. Educational justice will happen if we lead the way. Designing the next model of education is under way, and who is more equipped with the skill and knowledge to create it than us. Unionism is on the rise and we are on the crest of the wave.

Our goal in 201-22 is to shake off the malaise and anxiety of this school year and return with vibrancy and enthusiasm. Identify new leaders for our union. Build our union strength. Organize for



HOME ROOM

power. Develop community coalitions. We say “FSUTA wants what is best for students” and now it is time to put those words into action.

Too often management tries to third-party FSUTA. What I mean is they talk about FSUTA and teachers as separate entities. Committees are established with teacher input and FSUTA representation as though those are different. Management’s continual use of such language and actions seeks to erode our power.

Our first step is to reclaim the narrative. We have built a union that is member-driven, transparent and has at its core the understanding “WE ARE FSUTA.” In 2021-22, more than 50 percent of our members will have been employed by the district for five or fewer years. This creates a great opportunity for our union because we do not have tied to old methods and old systems.

The education model is under construction, so we must also redesign our union based on what our members want and need. That means everyone must step forward to make this a reality.

Most of us have seen “Finding Nemo,” but few of you probably think of the movie as a call for unionism and collective power. Think back to the scene in which Nemo and Dorie find Dad only to be caught in a fishing boat’s net. Nemo knows what to do to save Dorie and the other fish. They “swim down together” to break the net free from the boat and swim away.

When we need to break free from a net, we can do it if we don’t give up and just keep swimming. See you in the pool next year. The water feels fine.

Nancy Dunn, FSUTA President

Parting gift of gratitude



Jo Lynne Briggs

This is hardly how our 23 retirees wanted to sail away, but their diligence to the end speaks to why they became educators in the first place. We wish them the best. Your FSUTA leaders and colleagues will miss you. Even more importantly, so will thousands of students.



Cynthia James



Cathy Bryan and Dayna Rigot



Lisa Rushing

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| Joanne Acosta
<i>Armijo</i> |  | Phyllis McFadden
<i>Public Safety Academy</i> |
| Kathy Boyajian
<i>Nurse</i> | | Lillian Muniz Thompson
<i>Virtual Academy</i> |
| Jo Lynne Briggs
<i>Dan O. Root II</i> |  | Barbara Niehoff
<i>Fairview</i> |
| Cathy Bryan
<i>Tolenas</i> | | Margene Rich
<i>Sem Yeto</i> |
| Deborah Campbell
<i>Cordelia Hills</i> |  | Dayna Rigot
<i>Tolenas</i> |
| Janine Dagna-Mueller
<i>David Weir</i> | | Lisa Rushing
<i>Laurel Creek</i> |
| Leslie Farwell
<i>Fairview</i> |  | Art Sullivan
<i>Matt Garcia</i> |
| Karen Hall
<i>K.I. Jones</i> | | Maria Vermes
<i>Nelda Mundy</i> |
| Cynthia James
<i>Laurel Creek</i> |  | Thomas Vohs
<i>Green Valley</i> |
| Kevin Kenyon
<i>Tolenas</i> | | Robin Voss
<i>Public Safety Academy</i> |
| Diane Long
<i>Nurse</i> | | Concepcion Woltersdorf
<i>Rolling Hills</i> |
| Meena Mathew
<i>B. Gale Wilson</i> | | |

'WHO' Award goes to Harris

Just like an American Express Card, Sue Harris never leaves home without her orange Catastrophic Leave folder. The Rolling Hills teacher wants to be prepared in case an FUSTA member is facing adversity and needs to be off work for a lengthy time.

For volunteering to assist members, Sue was honored May 21 at Rolling Hills when FSUTA President Nancy Dunn paid a visit to present Sue with the "WHO" (We Honor Ours) Award for 2021. The native of Manchester, England was "flabbergasted" by her colleagues' applause. She deserved each and every clap.



Sue Harris

2020-21 Site Representatives

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Music makes Grange teacher

Six years as a para educator were enough to convince JR Fry that he was not cut out to become a special education teacher. It did not take nearly that long for the 2003 Fairfield High School graduate to figure out that selling cars, or at least trying to sell cars, was not his cup of tea as well.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to get into,” RJ said. “I was all over the place.”

Pursuing a career in music would have made sense since RJ has been hooked on music since the first time he tried to play a clarinet at Laurel Creek Elementary. Once he shared that with his father, Robert Sr. pulled out his drum set and encouraged his son (JR stands for Robert Jr.) to bang away.

RJ joined the band at what was then Dover Middle School and switched to the drums at the suggestion of Wally Hunt, who was the band director at Dover and played drums in his spare time. JR then took his drumsticks to play for Fairfield High’s Scarlet Brigade, which marched in the Tournament of Roses parade when JR was a freshman in 2000.

Marching band was just the beginning for JR. He was also in the concert band, jazz band and wind ensemble. By the time he graduated, JR wanted nothing more to do with music because he was “burned out.” He found relief by shipping off to Hawaii Pacific University to study psychology.

After figuring out what he did



not want to do for a living, become a special education teacher or sell cars, RJ finally listened to his heart and fell in love again with music. He studied at Diablo Valley College and Cal State East Bay on his way to a credential, which he is putting to good use as the band director at Grange Middle School. RJ applied for the job at Grange on the advice of a CSUEB music professor.

As Dr. John Eros explained, “(JR) is the second-fastest talking student that we’ve had in music education. I think -

suspect perhaps - that his classes will run at a fast pace. This is a prerequisite to middle school engagement. JR has an energy and an enthusiasm to which, in my view, middle school students respond well.”

RJ stays in touch with his professor, and Eros is not at all surprised to see his pupil prosper. “There are times when you can see down the road into what a music ed student would look like in a school with their own program.” Eros explained. “I can see him at the door knowing every kid’s name and favorite show. I can see kids wanting to eat lunch in Mr. Fry’s room. So much about being a band director is the ability to establish a positive culture. I think that he has that.”

What the 35-year-old RJ has is a bright future in education. “I love it here,” he said. “Middle school is a lot of fun.”



JR Fry puts covers on wind instruments for COVID-19 safety.